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IN THE ABSTRACT:

a Please amend the abstract as follows. A marked-up copy of the abstract showing the changes made thereto is attached in Appendix A.

-- A diffractive optical element, which is used for an optical system of an exposure apparatus, includes a light-shielding member composed of a laminated layer of Cr oxide and Cr at a periphery of an effective area. --

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IN THE CLAIMS: ✓

Please CANCEL claims 1, 3-26 and 28-70 without prejudice to or disclaimer to the recited subject matter. ✓

Please ADD new claims 71-85 as follows. For the Examiner's convenience, all claims currently pending in this application have been reproduced below:

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71. A diffractive optical element, which is used for an optical system of an exposure apparatus, said diffractive optical element comprising:

a light-shielding member composed of a laminated layer of Cr oxide and Cr at a periphery of an effective area.

72. A diffractive optical element according to Claim 71, wherein said light-shielding member comprises an alignment mark.